

Valley Region TMDL Implementation Workshop “Action and Responsiveness Summary”

This is a compilation of existing and planned efforts made by DEQ and DCR to improve the TMDL program based on suggestions and comments from the TMDL Implementation Workshop. The facilitators of the discussion groups discussed these items as well as other issues that came up during the workshop but it is by no means an exhaustive list. We encourage you to share other planned or ongoing stakeholder actions/initiatives that you or others have been involved in that are not included in this list by emailing Nesha Mizel (nesha.mizel@dcr.virginia.gov) or Tara Sieber (tlsieber@deq.virginia.gov). After receiving your comments and additions to this list, we will make the appropriate changes and re-distribute this summary to further facilitate local awareness and coordination of water quality initiatives in the Valley Region. Thank you for your continued interest and dedication to improve the TMDL program.

Communication

- ❖ Agency staff are committed to continuously improving the content and delivery of our message. To this end, DEQ and DCR are hoping to enlist the help of the Canaan Valley Institute to prepare a workshop for the agencies to increase community involvement in the TMDL process. CVI has facilitated TMDL staff workshops in the past. A half-day session on improving public participation was held at the VA Soil and Water Conservation Society's TMDL Workshop in October 2004. Results from this workshop will be reviewed and included in the next joint training session for DEQ/DCR TMDL staff. Other recent DEQ training opportunities have included “Preparing and Managing Presentations” and “Communicating technical information to non-technical audiences”.
- ❖ Based on vocalized concerns from the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, DEQ decided not to de-list Moore's Creek in Charlottesville for the 2006 Assessment. Although data within the assessment window was not in violation of water quality standards, more current data that violated standards was reviewed as requested. From this newer data, it was determined that Moore's Creek should not be de-listed.
- ❖ DEQ and DCR are working together to communicate and release more TMDL success stories. DEQ has highlighted some progress in the Valley Region on its website at <http://www.deq.virginia.gov/tmdl/jpproj.html>. Information on developing success stories in Muddy Creek and Dry River has been shared with watershed residents as well as presented at state wide and national water quality meetings. DEQ and DCR will commit to jointly incorporate these success stories into educational materials presented at the start of TMDLs in new watersheds. DCR reports success stories to EPA in the spring of each year. Last year's success story was the Middle Fork Holston. In Spring of 2006, DCR will report on Muddy Creek and Dry River's success in decreasing bacteria loading from agricultural land with voluntary fencing.

- ❖ DEQ's Office of Public Affairs has developed specific templates for the TMDL program staff to use for public meeting announcements. These templates were developed to explain the TMDL message in plain and simple language.
- ❖ DEQ commits to contacting state planning associations and requesting an opportunity to address their members at an upcoming meeting of the association. DEQ hopes to communicate the importance of planning in improving water quality and draw their participation in the TMDL process.

Education and Outreach

- ❖ In an effort to further education and gain the support of local governments in water quality issues, DEQ commits to preparing and presenting county level water quality assessments to each county and Soil and Water Conservation District in the Valley Region. DEQ is currently preparing the State-wide 2006 Water Quality Assessment and this information will be broken down to the county level and presented in a simple and understandable way.
- ❖ DEQ and DCR are committed to continuously improving our outreach methods to increase public meeting attendance and stakeholder involvement. Our outreach methods will continue to include newspaper and radio announcements, signs, mailing, and email announcements. In addition, DEQ commits to working with local groups to develop watershed specific outreach strategies that will use the most effective outreach tools for the area.
- ❖ DCR and Virginia Tech's Cooperative Extension are collaborating on developing a stream fencing publication to highlight the benefits of livestock exclusion towards livestock and stream health.
- ❖ DCR and DEQ developed a Fact Sheet for the Blacks Run and Cooks Creek IP to highlight key concepts and components of the implementation plan for the general public.

Funding

- ❖ DEQ and DCR staff members and program managers will continue to communicate to legislators the need and importance of continued monetary support for Virginia's commitment to cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay and impaired waters.
- ❖ DCR commits to continue targeting implementation in TMDL watersheds with grants from the Water Quality Improvement Fund (WQIF).
- ❖ A Rapid Watershed Assessment Proposal has been submitted by DCR's Shenandoah Watershed Field Office to the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Funding would be used to collect and consolidate stakeholder input from throughout the South Fork Shenandoah Watershed and potentially initiate several

pilot implementation projects with the integration of Tributary Strategies, TMDLs and watershed planning efforts. Implementation of on-the-ground pilot projects would be contingent upon the availability of funding from NRCS.

Integration of TMDLs and other programs/agencies

- ❖ DEQ and DCR continue to improve collaboration and coordination of TMDL implementation efforts across the state. To further communication, DCR recently distributed the Section 319 Semi-Annual Report required by EPA to technical staff in both agencies, which details the progress made in implementation projects funded in the state. In addition, a joint meeting was recently conducted in Charlottesville to update staff across regional boundaries of implementation efforts and projects. At this meeting, DEQ and DCR TMDL Program staff met with Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Program staff and both parties committed to increase communication and integration of the two programs.
- ❖ In an effort to better integrate county comprehensive plans with TMDLs and implementation, DEQ commits to recognizing county schedules for comprehensive plan development, submitting comments on water quality impairments and TMDL activities during development of those plans and assisting counties in watershed planning approaches. Consistent with these commitments, DEQ has recently submitted comments on the development of August County's Comp. Plan. In addition, DEQ and DCR are currently providing assistance to the Page County Water Quality Advisory Committee and their watershed planning efforts in advance of an implementation plan.
- ❖ In an effort to speed water quality improvements and reduce delays in the TMDL process which were identified as drawbacks at the Workshop, DEQ has experimented with a pilot project in the Chowan River Basin to develop TMDL and Implementation Plans simultaneously. Discussion and analysis will continue to see whether this plan of action is possible in other watersheds.
- ❖ The Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District is considering ways to become pro-active in addressing all of the TMDL issues as well as the Tributary Strategy mandates. It was the consensus at a recent TMDL meeting that a new structure combining all of the TMDL streams and the Tributary Strategy efforts under the guidance of one committee should be considered for Shenandoah County. The purpose of the committee would be to participate in the development of the Implementation Plan (IP) for meeting the objectives of the TMDL and Tributary Strategy programs in Shenandoah County. With broad, county-wide representation from citizen groups, local governments and state agencies, LFSWCD believes that such a committee could streamline the efforts of both the TMDL and Tributary Strategy programs and make them more effective and efficient.